

POPULISMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE

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Common characteristics of Populism

Populism:

- a) Is a political style more than an ideology (it could be right of left wing)
- b) Does an intensive, systematic use of transgressive and divisive rhetoric in a plain language fashion. Populists have little concern for political correctness; on the contrary part of its success consists in attracting media and people's attention. No topic is off-limits.
- c) Has a political discourse aimed at hot-button issues connected with people's fears and most pressing concerns.
- d) Offers a clear identification of "The Enemy" (no the adversary): The Elites, the Oligarchs, the USA, Brussels, the Immigrants, the Muslims, etc.
- e) Systematically refers to "the people".
- f) Aims for radical, systemic change who cannot be brought about by the old parties, and in particular by the traditional Left: they are "political entrepreneurs", "shakers" not "managers".
- g) Takes advantage of lack of clear political alternatives to globalization, particularly on the part of the moderate Left.
- h) Rejects technocratic, expert-driven, consensual democracy. Politics is conflict, not consensus.
- i) Is a reaction against invisible, powerful economic forces that affect people's everyday life.
- j) Thrives if traditional parties lose prestige due to economic downturns and political corruption.

- k) Finds fertile ground among those citizens with unmet expectations
- l) Is characterized by programmatic minimalism: offers simple solutions to complex issues.
- m) Has charismatic leaders embodied with good communications skills
- n) Aims to gain political power through democratic means, but it is illiberal
- o) It is highly opportunistic
- p) Seeks a return to the national framework (this is true as well for the radical Left)

Right and left wing populisms

Since populism is not an ideology, it is not restricted to either the Right or the Left.

The main difference between Right and Left wing populism is that the first one emphasizes the ethno-cultural, even racial divide, whereas the second does it on the class divide (the enemy is the rich, the upper class, the oligarchs). A clear difference is obviously immigration, which is not opposed by left-wing populism. However, at least in Europe, both kinds of populism are in general against the EU, the euro and globalization at large. So there is a convergence on Europeanization and globalization, and an unavoidable gap when it comes to immigration.

Thus, right-wing populism is also more nationalistic, even though radical, left-wing populists in Europe have as well a negative view of economic integration at the European and global level given its capitalistic bias. In this regard, there is a confluence towards the Nation-State from populists from different ideological breeds, since both right-wing and left-wing populist reject critical economic globalization. Of course, in the case of right-wing populism the Nation-State must be protected also from immigrants and foreign cultural influences.

Also Latin American Populists (less so in Europe), do have a nationalist rhetoric, although it is not directed against immigrants or foreigners at large but to the US and the oligarchs, who are not truly part of the nation because they defend their privileges and are allied with foreign capitalists.

In this regard, we must take into account that it is not a matter anymore of left-wing populism in Latin America and right-wing populism in Europe. As the last European election has shown, now in the Old Place there are both kinds of populism, and they share a rejection of the EU, the Euro and economic and financial globalization. This left-wing populism is growing particularly in Southern Europe, and in Spain, parties like Podemos (We Can) has won more than a million votes and 5 seats in their first appearance before the voters. This party is lead by a charismatic journalist who openly takes inspiration from Latin American left wing populists. In Italy, a comedian like Beppe Grillo, shares with Spanish Podemos a rejection of the “Caste”, and a distaste for European integration. In this respect, Podemos and the 5 Star Movement are not so different from the French National Front.

Rise of populism in Latin America

Populism in Latin America is understood as the emergence of the forgotten population in the political sphere, traditionally kidnapped by the landed oligarchies, which occurred at the mid last century by personalistic political movements based on the masses (Löwy, 1989).

Currently, since the 90s, the emergence of these new movements in the region is called by some as the "Third Wave" of populism in Latin America (Susanne Gratius, 2007a), or "neo-populism" (De la Torre, 2013) or even “neoclassic populism” (Bonilla y Páez, 2003).

These new, left-wing populism movements in the Americas arise as a direct result of the economic crunch of the 19080s. This brought about a crisis in the institutional system. In addition, populism was fed by the failure of traditional parties, and also as a consequence of a history of right-wing, military dictatorships. Two other key factors are the presence of dispossessed indigenous peoples and natural resources in the hands of oligarchs and foreign companies.

Latin America, due to increasing public debt as a result of the petrodollar boom of the 1970s, began implementing the economic policies of the Washington Consensus in the early 1980s, which had a negative impact in the region in terms of living standards and inequality. These were the years of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) introduced by the IMF and the World Bank as a condition for getting loans. Neoliberal policies such as fiscal adjustment, obsession with the deficit, contraction of public spending, reducing the role of the State in the economy, market deregulation and mass privatization paved the way for this populist comeback. The failure of these policies will be forever symbolized by the collapse of Mexico in 1994 and Argentina in 2001.

It is interesting to note that this factor has not been present in Europe until the 2007-2008 financial crisis. However, as it is now apparent, the fiscal adjustment policies applied since 2010 have now provoked the emergence of left-wing populisms in Greece (Siriza), Italy (5 Star Movement), Spain (Indignados movement, followed by Podemos), and the strengthening of existing right-wing populism (25 per cent of the vote in the last European election for the National Front in France). A new, Fascist-like political movement in Greece, Golden Dawn, collected more votes than the traditional Social-Democratic Party, PASOK.

In any event, the result in Latin America was the stark rejection of the traditional parties and the arrival of **"outsiders", new politicians that had never participated before in the parties system** (military personalities like Hugo Chavez, steelworkers like Lula, indigenous people like Evo Morales, clergymen like Fernando Lugo, former guerrilla fighter like José Mujica, etc.), mainly with eccentric personalities, but also endowed with great capacity for mass mobilization (Paramio, 2006) and communication skills.

Main characteristics of Latin American Populism

The basic characteristics that informed these left wing populist movements are the following:

- The political discourse is addressed to the impoverished masses.

- Society is described in dual social categories: the people and the oligarchy.

- Aiming for a new political system, including new participation schemes and constitutional reforms.

- Focus on social policies as a way of redistributing excessively concentrated wealth, but also active intervention in the economy through public sector companies.

- Recovery of natural resources and own sources of wealth currently in the hands of foreign companies. Latin American Populism find in this claim one of the most important parts of its political discourse. In this sense, once in power, they recovered (by means of expropriation) key natural resources, creating companies where at least 51% of the control is public, guaranteeing thus the government control of the strategic decisions of these resources (i.e. YPF in Argentina).

- Faith in the state as the main actor of economic policy.

- Anti USA rhetoric.

- Support for Latin American integration.

- Indigenism. Indigenous movements did not participate before in the public life of Latin America. For former populisms this was not a cause. However, this new populism is highly marked by the defense of indigenous rights. The case of Evo Morales is a pretty clear example. In countries such as Paraguay, Bolivia or Ecuador with wide indigenous communities, populists have incorporated the indigenous discourse more than others such as Argentina, where the impact of this question is still rather limited.

Some achievements

- Exponential increase in public spending, particularly social spending. According to CEPAL all countries in the region increased its public spending, Ecuador for instance, 8 points, while others such as Bolivia only 2.5 point GDP, during last years (since 2008)¹.
- They have achieved a greater redistribution of wealth. According GINI index evolution, between 2002 and 2010 the Gini coefficient declined in 14 of the 18 countries and in 13 this decrease was greater than 5 percentage points. Only Guatemala (latest year available 2006) and Dominican Republic had a significant deterioration in income distribution in this period², but these countries have not been ruled by populist leaders.
- They have achieved an improvement in development as measured by the Human Development Index. Concretely in countries such as Brazil it has gone from 0.522 in 1980 to 0.731 in 2013³.
- Regional integration is underway with different intensity and moderate success in the economic field (ALBA or MERCOSUR), security affairs (UNASUR), and media (Telesur). This new integration process has been named "post-liberal regionalism" (Sanahuja, 2007), because it is based on preserving autonomy from the US.

Setbacks and challenges ahead

- Long term sustainability of wealth redistribution. At the moment, many of these populist governments are conducting mere cash transfers to the lower classes based on availability of natural resources.
- Overcoming inequality remains a challenge: growth continues to benefit the upper classes in a disproportionate fashion.

¹ CEPAL. Perspectivas Económicas de América Latina. 2013.

² CEPAL. Panorama Social de América Latina. 2012.

³ PNUD. Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano. 2013.

- Insecurity, particularly in some countries like Venezuela.
- Endemic corruption.
- Developing institutionalism beyond populist leader's personalities.
- Solid fiscal reforms to ensure effective redistribution of wealth.
- Achieving stable growth even when the current demographic pyramid changes.
- The economies are still based on the export of raw materials. Thus they are dependent on the high volatility of commodity prices.
- These leaders need to move from this commodity export model to an industrialized one, investing further and better in human capital. Otherwise in the near future, a potential decrease of raw material prices could bring about a new crisis.
- Persistence of the informal economy.
- Overdependence on the Chinese market.
- Increasing regional imbalances. The emergence of economic powers such as Brazil creates asymmetries.
- Persistence of nationalism that delays effective regional integration.
- The environmental variable is not yet sufficiently factored in the industrial policy.
- Control increasing inflation

Two kinds of populism?

It seems that the region is divided between left-wing populists and left-wing moderates, even though some of the moderates come from a populist tradition such as Lula or Mujica.

The first group is composed for example of countries such as Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and to some extent, Argentina. These leaders base its redistribution policies in cash or in-kind transfers to the lower classes, without putting in place sophisticated public policies aimed to keeping people out of poverty in the long run.

The second group would be composed of countries such as Brazil or Uruguay, where they have developed their redistribution schemes through highly elaborated public policies with a long term outlook. Examples are Brazilian poverty policies, such as “Programa Bolsa Familia” or “Programa Hambre Cero”.

Moreover, it could be claimed that populism in Latin America is a heterogeneous movement. Each manifestation in each country is the result of its singular history. In the case of Bolivia the indigenous issue marked the emergence of Evo Morales, as well as the “Guerra del Gas” in 2003 before the arrival to power of Morales in 2005. In Venezuela the “Pacto de Punto Fijo” (pact to share the power by turns among the two main parties, AD and COPEI) since 1958 until 1999, brought about an institutional crisis that helped an outsider like Hugo Chavez to gain power after a failed “coup d’etat”. In the cases of Argentina the crisis of “corralito” in 2001 pushed inside Peronism a left turn. Those are just examples that show that although there are some features in common, each populism is the product of the particular conditions in each country.

End of a cycle in Latin American populism?

Is Latin American populism finishing a cycle? It seems that this new populism (the third wave) widespread over the region since 2000s could be ending. The death of Hugo Chavez and the current political crisis in Venezuela, the corruption scandals in the Partido de los Trabajadores of Lula in Brasil, the electoral defeat of Correa in Ecuador last February in the main cities, or the falling down of Cristina Fernandez in Argentina since 2013 elections shows the decrease of Populism social support as a result of many years in power. The main reason of this “twilight” of populism is the exhaustion of its economic model, mainly through the increasing inflation of those countries, i.e, 56 per cent in Venezuela, 30 per cent in Argentina, etc. (Paranagua, 2014).

Populism in Europe

There is no European populism, but populism in European countries.

The term could be applied to a big variety of parties and movements in Europe, not only from the right-wing side of of the political spectrum. However, all of them have something in common, the following statement: “we are the actual representatives of the population”.

Thus they usually reject a legitimate opposition, and to some extent pluralism and, those from the right, diversity as well (Müller, 2014).

Thus the opposition to pluralism is a key feature. Populists are really convinced that they are the only ones that truly represent the people (Buruma, 2014).

Historically, while in Latin America populism has been left-wing, populism in Europe has adopted a right-wing outlook until the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the aftermath, which the last election cycle has made patently clear. Until the crisis, left-wing voters have mainly stayed around the more traditional Socialist and Communist parties, and these political forces have not adopted, at least until now, a fresher, populist outlook.

Right-wing populism in Europe develops the following discourse:

- Muslim religion as a threat
- Anti-immigration stance - Fear of freedom of movement
- Economic malaise is the fault of “Brussels” and mainstream parties
- Eulogization of their national identity

Origins and causes of right-wing National populism in European countries, or why half of manual workers in France vote for Le Pen: against immigration, Europeanization and Globalization

The 1970s set the stage to the rise of right wing populism due to increasing external immigration coming from the former colonies (particularly in France at the time) and the economic crisis, which marked the end of the Keynesian era, and the start of Neoliberal globalization. Thus, this kind of populism has coincided with the triumph of Neoliberalism, the erosion of traditional Social Democracy and the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe.

Social Democracy in the 1980s was in retreat almost everywhere in Western Europe, unable to explain the supply-side crisis of the 1970s while progressively embracing more positive views of the free market system, including privatization and trade and capital liberalization. As for the Communist Parties, in the West they were kept out power due to Cold War dynamics, and after 1989 they lost much of its appeal. In addition to this, it is important to note that these political forces have a radical message vis-à-vis Globalization but their style is not populist, at least until now, nor have been led by people endowed with particularly good communications skills or personal appeal (young, energetic, outsider, etc.). Lastly, Communist parties in the West, with some exceptions, have not been opposed to European integration “per se”; they have called for a different kind of Europe. Au contraire, both far-right and radical left populists do share a clear rejection of regional integration in Europe, even though some in the traditional communist left share this view while some left-wing populists have a more nuanced view of the EU, which is

closer to the idea of a “another Europe is possible”. We have to take into account that traditional communist parties and the new left-wing populists have common ideological traits and some of the latter’s leaders have been members of the former.

Thus as a result, the far right started to gain ground among working class voters, also because the traditional left had little to say about the immigration issue, which does have an economic impact on low-skilled workers in terms of downward pressure on wages and a higher ratio of jobseekers per vacancy. Hence, as early as 1984 the National Front in France, founded in 1972, was winning 11 per cent of the vote. On the 25th May 1 out of 4 voters did.

In addition to the immigration issue, from the mid-1980s onwards Europeanization was starting to be seen as the Trojan horse of Globalization, a phenomenon that destroys jobs at home due to open borders and foreign competition, while European institutions were seemingly pursuing a Neoliberal agenda in the EU. In this regard, the Single European Act paved the way not only for the single market in Europe, but also for the unilateral liberalization of capital flows with the rest of the world.

At the time of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, only 2 out of 12 governments in the EU had a Socialist prime minister. A monetary union was born with no fiscal or social underpinnings, excepting strict limits to government deficits and public debt, a sort of restrictive fiscal federalism. Social Democrats by and large supported it since it meant nonetheless a move towards further European integration, seen as a good thing in itself. Thus, the Stability and Growth Pact agreed in Maastricht imposed spending limits to the Member States without Europeanizing the Welfare State, while the rhetoric and recommendations coming from the EU Commission is invariable centered on improving competitiveness and not on promoting social policies at the national level.

As for the traditional Communist parties, weakened by the fall of the Berlin in 1989, they opposed the arrangements of Maastricht but have not called in general for leaving either

the UE or the Eurozone, even though the Party of the European Left proposed in this election returning some competencies to the National Level.

Still, leaving the EU, the Eurozone and the recovery of national sovereignty is common among radical, extra-parliamentary left-wing parties beyond the traditional Communist parties, because they are considered tools of global capitalism that cannot be reformed, and this discourse has been adopted to some extent by emerging left wing populists in Europe. In this respect, there is a degree of convergence between the radical right and the radical left when it comes to Europeanization and Globalization. There is though complete divergence on the immigration cleavage as well as on the need to preserve traditional values and national identity.

Immigration is precisely one of the main issues of the populist right. According to this story-line, immigration puts downward pressure on local wages and increases the number of competitors for the same job vacancy. The French National Front made the “national preference for jobs” its trademark. Hence European right-wing populism is certainly nationalist, opposed to both foreign workers and foreign products. In this sense, is also anti-European as far as there is no distinction between migrants from within or outside the EU. This is very clear in the case of the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP).

To sum up, the right-wing populism that came of age in the 1970s and 1980s has become more explicitly anti-European over time, nurtured by increasing integration and the corresponding loss of national sovereignty and the perceived lack of democratic legitimacy. This is clearly the case of the National Front in France, a party that started mainly as a reaction against immigration. Later on, it took on Europeanization and Globalization.

Euroskepticism as populism

Almost all populists in Europe are Euroskeptical or Europhobes (on the right), or at least highly critical of the present-day EU institutions and policies (on the left). Thus, we must

acknowledge that Euroskepticism is found on both sides of the ideological spectrum. While right-wing Euroskeptics reject European integration largely in order to preserve national identity and keep immigrants out, the left-wing ones tend to propose a return to the Nation-State as a better alternative than a Neoliberal Europe.

However, not all Euroskeptics are populists. There are a number of citizens, politicians, academics and intellectuals that believe the European project is either not desirable in itself or that has become too ambitious and overwhelming and doubt that national rivalries can be overcome. These Euroskeptics do not have a populist style, but an intellectually conservative outlook. Still, this approach does not have a strong political incarnation except perhaps a growing faction of the British Conservative Party (where some have nonetheless adopted a populist discourse).

Euroskepticism in its populist version displays a discourse against European technocrats, often vulgar, ad personam attacks, while pointing out the lack of popular sovereignty and democratic legitimacy in the EU.

In comparison with the French National Front, The United Kingdom Independence Party, UKIP, is a much more recent phenomenon. It is almost a single-issue right wing populism since it centers around the membership of the UK in the EU. It is of course anti-immigration, but as part of a general disgust from everything connected with EU policies and an affirmation of British national identity.

Still, the negative outcome of the referendums in 2005 on the European Constitution (Holland and France) showed Euroskepticism was not confined to the UK nor to the right: the referendum was lost in the French Republic partly as a result of the split within the Socialist Party on the issue, due to the lack of a proper social dimension in the Constitutional Treaty. In the Czech Republic as well, former President Klaus derided the EU and compared it with the Soviet Union.

In any event, the financial and economic crisis has strengthened this rhetoric against the EU institutions by both right and left wing populisms. In this sense they follow on the footsteps of previous stages in European history (the rise of political extremism in the 1930s when there was as well lack of economic prosperity and a weakening of the interwar party systems).

In addition to attacking the EU institutions, populist parties have developed a discourse against other Member States, which is a novelty. Thus, left-wing populists in Southern Europe have directed their rhetoric against the Germans, responsible of being egotistic and imposing austerity, while in Germany and Finland have surged newly created parties (Alternative for Germany, True Finns) that claim their virtuous countries are being exploited by the irresponsible Greco-Latin partners.

Nonetheless, it will be very difficult for the different right-wing populist parties to join forces at the European Parliament (the non-Social Democratic Left is already organized as a parliamentary group). It is important to bear in mind that MEPs do not have real influence in the European Parliament unless they belong to a parliamentary group, and this requires members from different countries in sufficient numbers.

The right wing populists have wide differences among all of them (Buruma, 2014) and are very nationalistic, unlike their counterparts on the Left. It is highly unlikely to see rancorous British nationalist Nigel Farage joining forces with the French National Front just for the sake of their common distaste for the European project.

Plus, the surge of these parties in the last election cycle has been uneven. The UKIP and the National Front had good showings, but not Lega Nord in Italy or Wilders party in the Netherlands. The overwhelming majority of seats at the European Parliament is in the hands of clearly pro-European parties such as the European Popular Party, the Party of European Socialists, the Liberals, and the Greens.

Why not right wing populism in Latin America?

Several factors have prevented the emergence of right-wing populism in Latin America:

- a) External migration is not a factor nowadays like in Europe, where it is exploited in order to find scapegoats for social ills and the economic crisis. Internal migration is general less differentiated in terms of language, culture and religion.
- b) Latin American countries have been by and large subjected to right-wing dictatorships until relatively recently, hence leaving no appetite for far right parties in the democratic era.
- c) The impact of SAPs in the 1980s and 1990s has given support to left-wing populism; the economic collapse helped the political “outsiders”. The impact of radical fiscal adjustment policies has become a factor in Europe only after 2010 and it could become more so in the future if the economic stagnation continues.
- d) In Latin America regional integration is far less developed, and hence there is considerably less room to blame other countries or supranational bodies for economic troubles (with the exception of the USA).
- e) Anti-foreign rhetoric is limited to the USA as a result of a long left wing critical tradition of US imperialism. Although there is a relatively large homogeneity in the region (language, culture...) it seems to be the only topic that is common and able to overcome the nationalism.
- f) A lower degree of cultural and linguistic heterogeneity compared to Europe, and a tradition of Ibero-American rhetoric that is shared by both the Left and the Right, going back to the emancipation from the Spanish and Portuguese empires. No comparable tradition of a common heritage can be found in Europe and thus traditional nationalism still plays a considerable role in European politics, which is exploited by right-wing populist parties through stereotypes and prejudices.

- g) An older tradition of inter-racial relations including coupling, which makes racism and xenophobia less likely to become politically acceptable vis-a-vis Europe.
- h) In Latin America nationalist rhetoric is captured by the populist Left: nation = people = disempowered. The oligarchs are depicted as traitors to the nation/people because they are allied with foreign multinationals and multilateral organizations (IMF, WB). In Europe, the concept of nation is mainly captured by the anti-EU, far right, populist parties.
- i) The abundance of natural resources controlled by oligarchs and foreign companies and dispossessed indigenous peoples drives the populist point home about the divide between the rich and the rest.
- j) Lack of a decadent lower middle class and working class in Latin America in which the populist far right normally thrives (i.e. industrial workers losing jobs due to foreign competition, etc.) Where society is divided between a small upper class and a wide bottom composed of civil servants, workers and the poor, the traditional right does not leave much room for the populist far right, which has its base among those that have lost their status in society. Hidden racism particularly against indigenous peoples subsists in right wing parties and even across societies but it cannot be openly stated. In other words, manual workers in Latin America are by and large winners from globalization due to an increasing share of global production and trade, while low skilled workers in Europe are losers due to industrial delocalization, and downward pressure on wages as a result of immigration.

Conclusions

Perhaps the key difference between populism in Latin America and Europe, apart from the fact that the right-wing kind has been the norm until recently in our continent, is the

fact that the left-wing populism has actually ruled countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador or Uruguay. Populists in European governments have been more exceptional, although Haider's far right in Austria was part at some point of a coalition government and today Orban's populism rules Hungary.

As a result, while populism in Latin America maybe be at the end of cycle, as result of many years in government, populist parties in Europe from both right and left are growing in popular support, a process that has gone hand in hand with the recent economic crisis but also with immigration, Europeanization and globalization. To some extent, we witness, particularly in Southern Europe, a sort of "Latinamericanization" of politics.

In particular, EU institutions and policies have become a preferred target for all kinds of populists, and the moderates parties that have traditionally supported regional integration suffer from it. The EU post-national ideal and freedom of movement is despised by right wing populists. The lack of social dimension and support for free trade and capital movements with the rest of the world alienates both strains of populism, as well as its perceived lack of democratic legitimacy.

Paradoxically, despite social-democratic and Eurocommunist aspirations (political Europe as a counter-weight to the market), the politicization of integration (through a dense, rigid institutional apparatus) consolidated and solidified the liberalisation of Europe. In a sense, as Cramme aptly notices, "half-way federalization has brought the worst of both worlds to the fore".

Thus, the traditional post-War parties in support of European integration are not seen as problem solvers, particularly in the complex institutional structure of the EU. The EU, as argues Simon Hix, "is perhaps more consensus-oriented in its design than any other political system in the history of modern government".

For a policy to be adopted it requires (depending on the sector and institution) strong majorities or unanimity, which lead the member States or the national parties either to build grand coalitions or to abandon their policies.

Negotiation, the endless processes of compromise and wheeling and dealing, and the increased weight of technocratic solutions largely neutralise ideological fractures and the left-right cleavage. Europe reduces the political repertoire of party formations especially major parties with a governmental vocation. It tends to inhibit programmatic innovation whilst programmatic convergence and the weakening of cleavages find an extremely fertile terrain.

The “Europe” factor hinders genuine policy and governmental alternatives not only at the European level but also at national level. Consequently, the new European environment is conducive to the weakening of the ideological differences of contemporary moderate parties. They are not in a position to produce a grand vision, a new major narrative, an alternative perspective to the present and the future, even though such an alternative would probably be in their electoral interest.

By contrast and paradoxically, radical populist parties, Left or Right, have greater tactical flexibility today, and to some extent, greater strategic flexibility than the mainstream parties.

As said before, there are many similarities between the populisms of the Left and of the Right. The harsh criticism of globalization and finance capitalism, of the EU, of the downgrading of national parliaments and democracy, are just some of them. Attribution of central significance to the cleavage establishment/ people is another point of convergence between the Far Right and the Far Left. But the differences are just as great, if not greater.

Today’s Radical Left has for the most part embraced the themes and mottos of the 1960s New Left (feminism, ecology, minorities’ rights, multiculturalism, immigration etc.),

issues and preoccupations that share little common terrain with right-wing populism. In terms of economic policy its discourse bears increasing resemblance to that of the old Keynesian Social Democracy.

Solutions

The crisis of the representation of the social model existed well before the rise of populism; globalization and the end of Keynesianism during the 1970s accelerated this trend. The new populist forces only had to creep into the breach which was already there.

In particular, the rise of populism in Europe has coincided with the loss of vitality of the traditional left. Social democrats in particular, since the 1980s onwards, abandoned their classic ideology in favor of the free market and globalization. As Cuperus claims, social democracy has come to represent the educated, highly mobile middle class more than manual workers. As a result, they represent the winners of integration, whether it is Europeanization or globalization, while open borders for both workers and products are no good for the non-elites.

Thus, social democracy can regain ground among its traditional electorate emphasizing a viable alternative to Neoliberal Globalization, in particular ending support for free trade unless social and environmental standards are met by emerging economies, and repudiating privatizations. Some degree of protectionism in Europe is needed to re-industrialize the continent and reduce unemployment, and social democrats can support it.

A full federal political union in Europe, with a fully politicized Commission and a reduced role for the European Council is needed to counterbalance market liberalization and develop the social dimension of the project. In particular, the EU will become popular among citizens if they see benefits such as the obligation to set up a minimum wage in each country, unemployment benefits, non-contributive pensions, etc. In this sense, the EC Commission should at least complement the competitiveness and austerity

rhetoric with one promoting higher social standards within the EU. This is a natural agenda Social Democrats. This also means that the European Socialist Party must consider whether to support further the deepening of the single market on the condition of this being matched by progress on the political and social union.

Also, European social democrats can learn from populists in order to communicate their message better and create a dynamic of political conflict instead of a consensus one with the European Popular Party. As said before, the blurring of ideological differences at the European level and the lack of programmatic innovation in mainstream parties helps populists. Moreover European socialists depend excessively of professional politicians, which are typically risk-averse personalities who follow the party line strictly, a rather unappealing kind of public persona.

Lastly, populism in Europe also exploits the average citizen lack of knowledge of how the EU works, simplifying the reality or making outright false claims. Hence EU institutions become a caricature. Those parties committed with European integration should agree to mainstream European civics education in all Member States.

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